

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

NEW YORK TIMES
15 May 1984

President Links Control of Arms To MX Missile

By STEVEN R. WEISMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 14 — President Reagan, stepping up his lobbying campaign to salvage money for the MX missile in the House of Representatives, said today that disapproval of the missile "would only encourage the Soviet Union to ignore our arms control efforts."

At an impromptu news conference at the White House, Mr. Reagan said that "there is no more compelling priority on my agenda" than persuading Moscow to rejoin arms control negotiations and that approval of the missile was essential to this task.

"We must not cast doubt on U.S. or allied reserve nor reward the Soviets for their current belligerent behavior towards arms control," the President said.

The President's statements on the missile were the second public appeal in a week on a national-security issue that was in trouble in the House. Last week, a speech by the President helped win approval of military aid for El Salvador.

Commenting on Central America today, Mr. Reagan denied recent reports that the Central Intelligence Agency had tried to manipulate the results of the election in El Salvador.

"I don't think that there was any attempt by any agency of the United States Government to participate in a partisan fashion in that election," Mr. Reagan said. At another point, he added that he had been "assured that we have not tried to participate as a Government in any way" in the elections.

It was disclosed last week that the C.I.A. had given money to two moderate political parties in El Salvador to oppose the election of Roberto d'Aubuisson, the right-wing candidate. José Napoleón Duarte, a moderate, has been declared the winner.

2 Sides Agree on Votes

His comments on the missile came as both Administration aides and foes of the missile said there were not now enough votes in the House to approve production money for the missile this year. A vote on a military authorization bill on the missile is scheduled Wednesday.

White House officials said Mr. Reagan would be on the telephone this week with wavering moderate Democrats and Republicans. "It's strictly uphill," one official said. "A week or two ago, we weren't even in the competitive range, but I think it's coming back."

Democratic leaders in the House today reiterated their prediction that the Administration-supported measure, which calls for the production of 30 MX missiles this year, would be defeated. They said the only chance for the Administration was a compromise advocated by Representative Les Aspin, a Wisconsin Democrat and past supporter of the missile.

Both Mr. Aspin and Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. said that, if there was a choice between 30 missiles and no missiles, the House would vote overwhelmingly for no missiles.

Mr. Aspin's bill would authorize money for only 15 missiles and would delay spending the money until next April. At that time, if the Soviet Union still refused to return to nuclear arms negotiations, the money could be spent, according to an early version of Mr. Aspin's compromise.

Congressional aides reported today, however, that Mr. Aspin was revising the language on when the money could be spent in an effort to win votes for the measure.

White House Not Giving Up

White House officials said they were not yet prepared to give up trying to win approval for the full 30 missiles in the House. But they said that eventually the Administration might have to strike a deal with Mr. Aspin to salvage the missile.

"We need the whole program, but clearly we will work with Les Aspin to get what we can get," a White House aide said. "We don't want to concede right now that his compromise is the best thing to go with. The President has yet to bring to bear all his persuasive powers on this one."

The MX, which is designed to be a powerful and accurate missile with 10 nuclear warheads, has been advocated by the Administration to counter the buildup of big multiwarhead land-based missiles in the Soviet Union. Critics charge that it would unnecessarily intensify the arms race and would be vulnerable to Soviet attack.

MX stands for "missile experimental." Mr. Reagan has dubbed it the Peacekeeper.

The Administration has won a series of votes for the missile in the Democratic-controlled House but only after agreeing to modify its arms-control approach to the Soviet Union.

Even so, critics say the missile's value as a "bargaining chip," or incentive for Moscow to negotiate arms reductions, is diminished because the Soviet Union has stopped nuclear arms talks.

40 Missiles Were Sought

White House officials acknowledge that the continuing arms control deadlock has caused widespread disenchantment on Capitol Hill with Mr. Reagan's argument for the missile. They planned to counterattack this week by arguing that killing the missile would reward the Soviet Union for its behavior.

Last year, the Administration won approval of production money for the missile by only nine votes, and many House members have switched since then.

Originally, the President sought \$5 billion for production of 40 missiles. The House Armed Services Committee trimmed the request to 30. The Aspin proposal would provide standby spending of \$1.8 billion for the 15 missiles.

The Administration is eager to avoid having its proposals constantly whittled away. White House aides hope that the Republican-controlled Senate will approve Mr. Reagan's original request, however, leaving open the possibility of a final compromise that is more to their liking.

Mr. Reagan began his news conference this afternoon with a lighthearted allusion to his appearance earlier today with Michael Jackson, the popular singer, who wore a glittering blue and gold outfit.

As the President entered, a reporter murmured that he didn't look like he was Mr. Jackson. "Not a single rhinestone," Mr. Reagan replied with a smile.

Link to Arms Control

He then spoke about arms control, saying that the MX was a key part of the overall strategic modernization program, and that he had agreed earlier to make trade-offs with the Soviet Union to persuade it to agree to talk about reducing its land-based missile force.

He said that "despite all our initiatives," the Soviet Union refused to return to negotiations on reducing medium-range and long-range nuclear missiles and had not responded positively to American proposals to eliminate chemical warfare weapons or reduce conventional forces in Europe.